



MEETING SUMMARY

MEETING: High Capacity Transit System Plan Think Tank
DATE: Oct. 14, 2008
TIME: 3 to 6 p.m.
PLACE: Metro, 600 NE Grand Ave., Metro Council chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT

Charlotte Boxer	Pacific Continental Bank
Wink Brooks	Wink Brooks Strategies LLC
Tom Dechenne	Norris, Beggs & Simpson
Joe Dills	OTAK
Karen Frost	Westside Transportation Alliance
Mara Gross	Coalition for a Livable Future
Jim Howell	AORTA
Chips Janger	Clackamas County Urban Green
Jon Kellogg	Commercial Realty Advisors NW
Ernie Munch	
Wilda Parks	North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce
Michelle Poyorouw	Bicycle Transportation Alliance
Phil Selinger	Willamette Pedestrian Coalition
Ethan Seltzer	Portland State University
Chris Smith	
Ric Stephens	Urban Land Institute
Dennis Wilde	Gerding Edelen
Rick Williams	Lloyd Transportation Management Association
Lori Waldo	

MEMBERS ABSENT

Keith Lawton
Robert Stacey

PROJECT STAFF

Metro	Councilor Carlotta Collette, Ross Roberts, Tony Mendoza, Crista Gardner
Project consultants	Jeffrey Tumlin and Tom Brennan, Nelson\Nygaard, Jeanne Lawson and Sam Beresky, JLA Public Involvement

I. WELCOME AND PROJECT INTRODUCTION

On Oct. 14, 2008 the first HCT Think Tank meeting was held for the Regional High Capacity Transit (HCT) System Plan project.

Metro Councilor Carlotta Collette gave an introduction and overview of the project. She welcomed the members of the Think Tank, advising that their task was to challenge Metro and to think about transit being more than just lines on a map. She asked the members for creative thinking about placemaking.

Ms. Jeanne Lawson, JLA Public Involvement, reviewed the agenda and provided some guidelines for group discussion.

Councilor Collette gave a presentation outlining the history, context and charge of Metro, including outlining the values of the region.

Ross Roberts gave a presentation outlining the context and background of high capacity transit (HCT) in the region. Mr. Roberts said that the next high HCT lines should support the regional 2040 Growth Concept and will feed into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

II. STAFF AND MEMBER SELF-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Roberts introduced the Metro staff (Ross Roberts, Tony Mendoza, Crista Gardner and Karen Withrow) and the consulting teams (Jeffrey Tumlin and Tom Brennan, Nelson\Nygaard; Jeanne Lawson and Sam Beresky, JLA Public Involvement). Ms. Lawson asked that each Think Tank member introduce him- or herself and answer the question: What do you think is the greatest challenge for HCT in the region?

Ms. Mara Gross, Coalition for a Livable Future, said that besides funding, the biggest challenge is to ensure that the system provides benefits to everyone in the region, that people are not displaced, and to serve those that need transit most.

Ms. Michelle Poyorouw, Bicycle Transportation Alliance, said that besides funding, the biggest challenge is to match transit to land use.

Mr. Rick Williams, Lloyd Transportation Management Association, said that besides funding, the biggest challenge is getting communities to transform the way they do business and to recognize transit stations as assets – community places – not just something to leave from. He believes this will result in a complete mode split shift.

Mr. Ric Stephens, Urban Land Institute, said that besides funding, coordination between land use and transit is the biggest challenge.

Mr. Wink Brooks, Wink Brooks Strategies LLC, said the biggest challenge is to improve coordination between local governments and the region, to form partnerships and identify funding. He also said that Metro needs to identify who is being served and what kind of trips people are making, specifically in the suburban context.

Mr. Jim Howell, Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates, said that the biggest challenge is funding, not just for capital costs but for operations as well. He also said that we need to look at HCT from a system-wide basis, not just at single corridors.

Mr. Dennis Wilde, Gerding Edlen, said that as gas gets more expensive, the next great slums may be in the suburbs, asking: How do we deal with that? How do we provide the transit service to help mitigate that? He mentioned that we, as a region, will have our own challenges, different than Phoenix and Atlanta, and that we need to think bigger not smaller.

Mr. Chris Smith said that we need to separate the means (access) from the ends and create a system that allows access for everyday needs, for everyone.

Ms. Wilda Parks, North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce, said that capital and operations funding is the biggest challenge. She said that we need to move beyond the mindset of just getting people from point A to point B by connecting land use and transit and then educating about the benefits of HCT.

Mr. Jon Kellogg, Commercial Realty Advisors NW, said that there needs to be better coordination with developers to look for development opportunities that will lead to better growth along HCT lines.

Ms. Charlotte Boxer, Pacific Continental Bank, said there is a lack of knowledge in corporate America about the benefits of transit and financing projects without parking. She said that Metro can build partnerships to educate about the benefits of these kinds of projects and the overall benefits of HCT that will ultimately lead to an increase in ridership.

Ms. Lori Waldo said that Metro needs to create a system that matches the 2040 Growth Concept map. She said that the regional and town centers will be enriched by connecting all of the centers of the region with HCT.

Mr. Tom Dechenne, Norris, Beggs & Simpson, said that funding is the biggest challenge, including balancing the limited funds between all types of transportation around the region.

Ms. Karen Frost, Westside Transportation Alliance, said that transit planners don't sit down with road planners. She mentioned that successful roads often stymie transit. She also said that connecting suburban employment centers to existing transit is a big challenge.

Mr. Phil Selinger, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, said that HCT is only as effective as the communities being built that are connected by transit. He said there needs to be better pedestrian access in these communities and the HCT plan needs to include pedestrian infrastructure.

Mr. Chips Janger, Clackamas County Urban Green, said that it is difficult to predict what will happen in the next 10 years with peak oil and climate change. He asked: How do we plan for a future that nobody really knows? He said that we need to be very imaginative and not just plan and build like we have in the past.

Mr. Ethan Seltzer, Portland State University, said that we need to get better at overcoming the challenges and at stating our case for high capacity transit. He said that we need to come up with compelling reasons to move forward to build public consensus for HCT. He also mentioned that leaders should see all existing right of ways as "land banking" for the transit system.

Mr. Joe Dills, OTAK, said that beyond funding, the biggest challenge is what we do near HCT to make better cities. The cultural, artistic and economic sides all are part of a successful city.

III. GLOBAL ISSUES AFFECTING TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jeffery Tumlin, Nelson\Nygaard, presented issues affecting global and regional transportation decisions the context for global and regional transportation planning.

IV. DISCUSSION

The group raised several issues and questions for the project team to consider throughout the process.

- An international perspective is important, but we need to focus on making transit work here in local communities, not envying others. We need to combat the auto culture with positives about transit.
- Would a carbon tax have to be put back into roads like the current gas tax? Councilor Collette confirmed that was the case, but that laws can change; the region can define it how we want it spent.
- High gas prices are our friends as they lead to an increase in transit. People will drive less, freeing up more space for transit.
- Our bigger challenge will be our auto identity as a nation. We have to begin to think about life without a car, just like other places in the world. It will take a shock to the system to do it.
- How do we spend more time with our families? What people value is not the car but spending time with family. We live in a global society; we need to be able to get from North Bethany to Shanghai without a car.
- It is important to know what is important about Portland and to that move forward and be true to ourselves. These values manifest themselves in the urban form, things like neighborhoods (not having a freeway every 20 blocks). We need to understand both energy and monetary budgets. We need to define what needs to be adjusted to get where we want to go.
- Land use needs to compliment HCT. Does the market really want the current choice or do they want something that is not being offered?
- A number of national studies show that there is a growing demand for higher density development. We talk about the 20-minute lifestyle, everything they need within a 20-minute walk. Let's design a transportation system that meets the urban form we want.
- There are strong indications that current population projections are very low, that they have not taken into account the possibility of economic and global climate change refugees.
- We need to think about how we are going to communicate about HCT. We need to stop talking about ridership and start talking about mode splits, decide what we want and plan/regulate to that. We are not planning fast enough to meet the growing demand for HCT. We need to think bigger.

- Lessons from the Portland streetcar experience are that great places have been created and some developers have made some money. We need to do a better job of place making around stations and then value capture at each station. Think in the larger context of the regional economy and the effect of localizing our economy.
- There is a lot more that drives the economy than what happens in our local neighborhoods. The region is a distribution center so we should not forget about all the industrial or other freight voices.
- Urban amenities are key to new investments. We need to foster a region of innovators across all sectors (financial, education, planning, etc.).
- From a developer perspective, different developments will work differently in different centers. The change (urban form and driving less) will come over time so we have to think about the redevelopment of future parking lots to urban uses in the outlying regional town centers.
- The average commute in this region is 12 miles. How do we use transportation as a means not the end?
 - Placemaking should be a top priority regardless of location.
 - HCT benefits might not be for riders but for the neighborhoods it is in, people will be able to walk more and drive less, people need the connectivity.
 - Complete communities are needed so people can work and live in the same area.
- How far, as a region, are we willing to go to put transit where the people are instead of building on the path of least resistance and expecting people to follow? (Example: MAX Green Line built along I-205 rather than down 82nd Avenue.)
- There are many places that it is impossible to get from A to B on transit. We need regional trunk lines and grid connections to build a system. We also need better transit between cities, at least hourly service to Seattle and Eugene.
- Placemaking is very important. The benefits of HCT are to the neighborhoods, not just the people on the train. Example: On the recent Scandinavian trip, participants saw that transit oriented development was dictated by the financing scheme, which created a large shopping mall, not a complete community. The place making did not happen and the project failed. Councilor Collette responded that the criticism of the Scandinavian project was that it was not cozy and that there was no connectivity for people. The financing scheme caused the wrong kind of development to occur.
- We must acknowledge the need for better connections beyond the region (Seattle, Eugene). We have to think big and plan for the future, one potentially without cars.
- How do we know when we have succeeded? If we can define that, we can then judge the magnitude of our task.
- We are in a materialistic society. It will take a very long time before we will not need cars. It seems odd that we cannot build HCT incrementally and add changes piece by piece. Can't we add incrementally to add to what we have?
- Building incrementally worked with the streetcar but it doesn't work that way at the federal level. We are entering an uncertain future. We need to build a system that will be solid through a full range of possible futures.

- It is tough to predict the future; in the 1970s, it was predicted an alternate future with the energy crisis, but that alternate future didn't happen. This is a matter of choice and competition. We need to decide on the alternative choices and then articulate the reasons for those decisions.
- Collectively, when will we begin to live within our means? Our nation is not on a sustainable path. How do we take on the marketers at their own game? What will make us feel good about where we live? We need to decide what we want to achieve and share that vision in an attractive way. Once we have done that we build public private partnerships to leverage what we want (example: the MAX Red Line).
- Historically, transit has competed with roads on an uneven playing field. A major part of planning HCT should be to make changes at the state and federal level to level the playing field or maybe unlevel it in favor of transit.
- Marketing comes into placemaking; consider the individual (iPod, iPhone, etc.). Who are you making the place for? What function? We have taboos here about everybody in the same place (unlike Europe). We need to partner with the places people already go (ex: Streets of Tanasborne,) and market the system with those places.
- People are driven to the suburbs because of housing affordability. We have to be able develop affordable housing along corridors and in centers. There is a huge a perception about safety and the new corridors need to be safe for everybody.
- Leaders have to balance the tension between the present in individual terms and the future on community and collective terms. Right now we are just too timid on tipping the balance for the future decisions.

Mr. Tumlin and Councilor Collette reiterated the themes that they each heard from the discussion:

- The plan needs to start from unique local values.
- Advertising manufactures desire and has been manufacturing desire about automobile culture for generations. There is a real opportunity to let the public sector take the lead on manufacturing desire in support of, and that fulfills our unique local values.
- There is a mutual relationship between transit, arts, culture, etc.; all the pieces that need to work together, on many levels, to create great places that respond to our desires and ultimately reflect our values.
- We should not follow the path of least resistance but follow the corridors that allow for opportunities to connect and create great places.
- The whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. With the unpredictable changes coming over the next 20 years, we need a network that provides:
 - ample choice
 - a great deal of redundancy
 - adaptability (because we don't know what is coming).
- Goals should be set and framed in a way that makes them attractive to people.
- Public-private partnerships should be created and nurtured.
- Project budgets should be advocated for on all levels.

- It should be more difficult to do the wrong things and easier to do things that are aligned with regional values.
- The diversity of people and their individualism should be planned for.

V. NEXT STEPS

Ms. Lawson invited the members to the lecture The future is here: Is business as usual good enough? on Oct. 8, 2008 and the joint MPAC/JPACT meetings on Oct. 22, Nov. 12, and Dec. 10. Ms. Lawson stated that the next meeting would be prior to Nov. 20 and address: how we are doing in the region; present regional trends, RTP scenario results and/or animated growth slides and regional policy questions.

VI. ADJOURN

Seeing no further business, Councilor Collette adjourned the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE PUBLIC RECORD FOR OCT. 14, 2008

The following have been included as part of the official public meeting record:

TOPIC	ITEM	DOC DATE	DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION	DOCUMENT NO.
I.	Memo	10/7/08	HCT Think Tank Charge	100708TTank-01
I.	Handout	August 2008	Making the Greatest Place Handout	100708TTank-02
I.	Handout	Summer 200	Going Places Handout	100708TTank-03
II.	PowerPoint	10/7/08	Issues in Transportation presentation by Jeffery Tumlin	100708TTank-04
	Handout	9/11/08	Public Outreach Summary Fall/Summer 2008	100708TTank-05
	Contact List	10/7/08	HCT Think Tank Contact List	100708TTank-06
	Invitation	10/7/08	Invitation to <i>The Future is Here: Is Business As Usual Good Enough?</i> Event	100708TTank-07